



Chronicling the work of Memphis and other Corps and federal employees involved in Task Force Hope

The Corps Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

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Officials dedicate classrooms at Belle Chase Primary School

by Lois Jackson

LA-RFO Public Affairs Office

A ribbon cutting ceremony Monday, March 27 at the Belle Chasse Primary School in Belle Chasse, La. celebrated students getting new classrooms.

Representatives from all agencies involved - local, state and federal - were among the 120 people who attended. This project was truly a partnership of the agencies.

During the destructive storm of Katrina, many school buildings in the lower portion of Plaquemines Parish were severely damaged and uninhabitable. The students from the affected area of the parish needed a place to attend classes and were accepted at schools in Belle Chasse. According to Belle Chasse primary and

middle schools principals, Belle Chasse needed to accommodate about 1,000 students.

They did this with the help of the Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) public assistance program, resulting in the installation of 12 temporary classrooms.



Lois Jackson photo

Students sing "America" at ribbon cutting ceremony.



Lois Jackson photo

These 12 modular classrooms at Belle Chase Primary School made it possible for students to return to classes.

The project started under the direction of the Corps' Louisiana Recovery Field Office Critical Public Facilities Project Manager Mark Moody. He got the ball rolling for the citizens of Belle Chasse and they are ever so

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Belle Chase

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grateful. When Moody finished his tour of duty, he was replaced with Len Havel.

Havel was astonished at the active participation of the teachers, administrators and school principals. Immediate responses from Plaquemines Parish School District representatives seven days a week were instrumental in expediting completion of the project.

The classrooms consist of 18 modules that are connected to make nine separate buildings. The nine structures will house 12 classrooms with computer stations, music rooms and multi-purpose classrooms.

Havel said, "The cooperation and coordination of all parties involved was overwhelming. Their dedication in the project made it one of the most rewarding experiences. This project is an example of FEMA, the school district, contractors, the classroom manufacturer and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers working together for the greater good of the Plaquemines Parish School District and children."

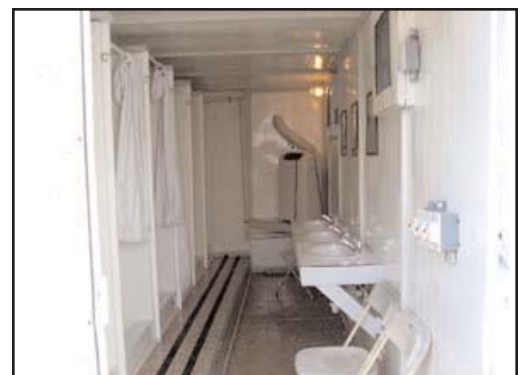


Lois Jackson photo

Left to right, Lt. Col. Stanley Smith LA-RFO; Steve Adukaitis, Special Assistant to the Federal Coordinating Officer, FEMA; Carol Roberts, Director of Secondary Education, Plaquemines Parish School Board; and James Hoyle, Plaquemines Parish School District Superintendent cut the ribbon.

Looking back at the beginning

These photos, sent to us by Memphis District Real Estate Chief Harris Vandergriff, show the tent city near the Port Allen Lock where many early hurricane volunteers lived. Conditions were quite Spartan, and coupled with the demanding schedule they endured, these early volunteers had a challenging but rewarding experience in the first days following Katrina's landfall.



NOLA District employee rebuilds life after Katrina

Story and photos by Lois Jackson
LA-RFO Public Affairs Office

With the eminent onslaught of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans district's Frank deBoer volunteered to be a part of the emergency team in the Memphis district. Just prior to the hurricane, he and his family left New Orleans for the Memphis area.

Frank's 90-year-old dad and brother stayed at their lakefront home during the storm which suffered major flooding. This is the second time in the 30 years of residing on the riverfront property, that flooding has occurred. Eventually, they too, had to evacuate and returned this week to a FEMA trailer until their home can be cleaned-up and repaired.

After Memphis, Frank's volunteer journey led him to the Louisiana Recovery Field Office to work as the team leader for the Resource Management Office.

When Frank returned to his home Sept. 27, the site was hard to fathom. His home, which had previously been submerged, now smelled and contained at least two feet of mud and sludge.

Frank's first thought was that of a "war zone"

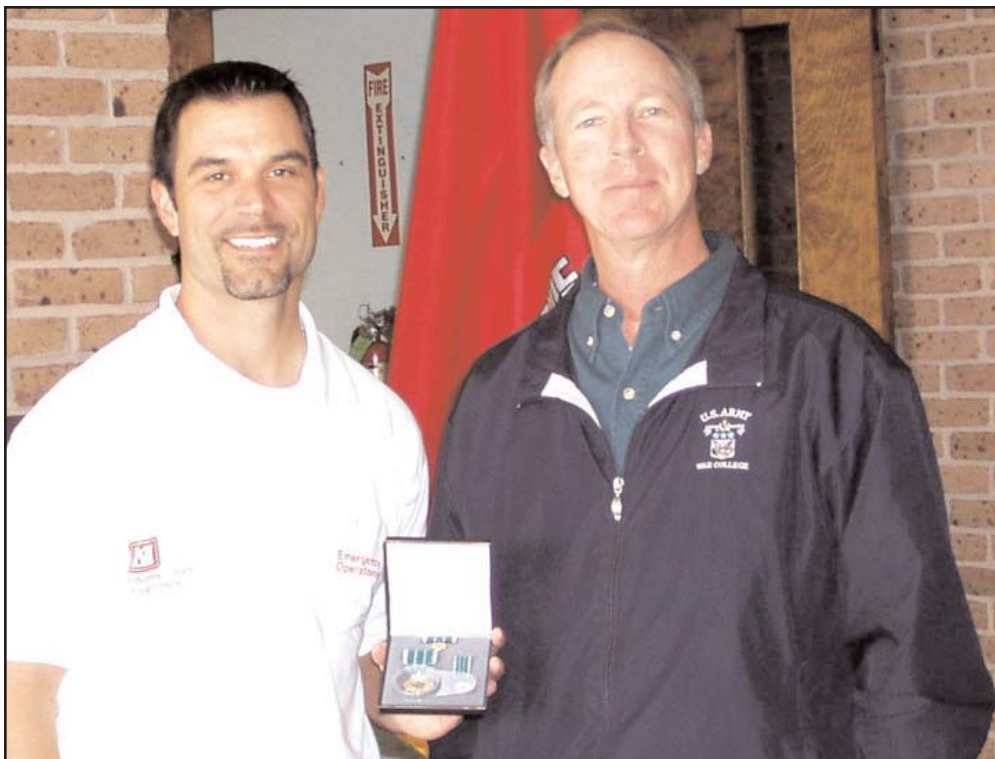
and he could only compare it to the clips he had seen on TV. "It was like watching TV, not believing it was real," he said.

Now he is in the process of cleaning up and reconstructing his home. He and his family, wife and daughters, are all living in a FEMA trailer.

Even though he realizes there are some things he and his family can't replace like old photos and original documents, he is just thankful that no one in his family was hurt. "I can replace the material things," he said. "I would never be able to replace family."

There is one thing that Frank was able to replace. A very important thing to him. On March 23, former St. Louis District and Iraq Reconstruction Office Commander Col. Kevin Williams (USA, Ret.) stopped at the LA-RFO to present Frank with a replacement of his Commander's Award for Civilian Service medal that was lost in the aftermath of the hurricane. Frank had received his original medal while working for Col. Williams in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

See more photos from this story on page 4



Frank deBoer (left) receives his new commander's award medal from his former commander in Iraq, Col. Kevin Williams (right).

Frank deBoer's damaged home



Inside the deBoer home when Frank returned after the storm.



After six months, Frank and his family's hard work can be seen in this photo taken from the same view as the hurricane damage photo above.



Donna M. Bulman received the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service from Col. Dwight Pearson.



Vicky Cambre received a Certificate of Appreciation from Col. Dwight Pearson.



Richard N. Guthrie received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



Fred C. Hanshaw received a Certificate of Achievement presented here by Col. Dwight Pearson.



William L. James received the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



Joanette Jones received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service presented here by Col. Dwight Pearson.



Melissa McKey received a Certificate of Appreciation presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



Thomas Minear received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service presented by Lt. Col. Stanley Smith.



John F. O'Leary received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



Patricia Shaw received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



Richard A. Sundberg received the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service, presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



LaToya Wilson received a Certificate of Appreciation presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



Matthew S. Zager received a Certificate of Achievement presented by Col. Dwight Pearson.



The mission of the RiverWatch Forward Online is to support the Commander's Internal Information Program for the Memphis District, particularly as it responds to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It seeks to do this in an informative and entertaining manner.

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